

"National Bank of the Republic" Revisited

John M. Randall (1336)

There has been considerable activity in study of the National Bank of the Republic perfins pattern (NBREPUBLIC) in recent years. There have been articles on the subject by Harry Rickard and John Lyding and also by Joe Miller (*TPB*, June 1991, pp. 141-44) and then with data from Tim Timmerman (*TPB*, February 1992, p. 25). The presumed 10-die pattern was discussed, and several pairs were illustrated, but still no proof was given that the entire pattern did exist.

The Catalog of United States Perfins (1979, Balough) lists all the ten individual letters as being verified on cover as used by The National Bank of the Republic, Chicago, IL. The previous edition of that catalog (1966) lists several of the individual letters as having verified covers. The 1958 non-illustrated catalog does not provide information on any of the dies. Thus, most of the verifying covers, if indeed they do exist, appeared after the 1966 Catalog was published. If so, where are these covers today? In fact, it is quite possible that all 10 identifying covers have never been seen. Somewhere in the past, someone probably saw strips of this pattern that were sufficient to prove that the carpet pattern existed. Unfortunately, this data was not published.

The next step was that an editor extended the positive identification to all ten subjects from a positive identification of one or more. Somewhere, at least one cover must exist with an identifying corner card.

That is all very well, but as editor of the forthcoming edition of *The Catalog of United States Perfins*, it is my task to determine what to do with this pattern. It has been decided to recognize the fact that there is only one pattern, not ten. Thus, instead of N3, B4, R2.5, E1, P3, U1, B1, L2, I4, and C1, the new catalog will list a single pattern, N36.5. The listing will be N36.5 NBREPUBLIC, used by The National Bank of the Republic, Chicago, IL. Incidentally, this is legitimized by rescinding the artificial ruling in previous catalogs that perfins with illegal dimensions would not be listed. The actual situation in the 1979 Catalog was that some patterns were rejected, but there are dozens of "illegal" patterns in that edition. This resolved the situation in a satisfactory manner (except to collector who disagree with the philosophy of listing "illegal" pattern), but it put me in a quandary. I am

listing a carpet pattern without positive proof that it existed, not a comfortable situation.

Now to the main point of this article. At the 1995 Precancel-Perfin Convention in Wilmington Delaware, I was offered a perfin accumulation that was astonishing! There were a number of multiple of the NBREPUBLIC pattern, almost enough to reconstruct the entire pattern. The entire pattern has been reconstructed from these multiples as is shown in the accompanying illustration. The only missing link is the "LI" pair, and I have seen this pair in another collection. Thus the proof is complete and perfins pattern N36.5 can be listed without fear of error. However, proof that it is indeed The National Bank of the Republic must be taken on faith from the previous catalog. The strip of four "NBRE", which is shown at the top right of the illustration, is the largest multiple that this writer has seen or heard about. Larger multiple may exist, but if so, the owners have not responded to pleas in the literature for further information.

Incidentally, possession of interlocking pairs has pointed out several listing errors in the current catalog. First, the initial large "B" is indeed B4, but the illustration of B4 in the catalog is incorrect. The illustration probably is a die variety of B2. Second, the "R" is R2.5, not R3, as was reported in the Miller article. Obviously, there should be exactly the same number of copies in existence of the ten letters of the carpet pattern. However, for some reason, the "R" has always seemed to be the scarcest letter, as indicated by the R2.5 is the only letter rated as an "A" pattern. This letter was also in the smallest quantity in the accumulation which produced the multiples. Presumably, this is just a statistical phenomenon.

As a last note, this pattern has only been seen on the 2¢ 1903 and on the 2¢ and 10¢ 1908 stamps. These are the correct stamps to be used for the first class and for the registry rate (10¢). The 2¢ and 10¢ stamps in combination could make up any rate needed by the bank, so long as no foreign mail was involved. The strip of four illustrated would probably have been a quadruple rate letter.

Illustrations on page 15.

Next month we will be providing a listing of members INTERNET addresses. If you have not reported your e-mail address send it to Floyd Walker perfins1@aol.com

